



## double-crested cormorant

*Phalacrocorax auritus*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Aves
Order:	Pelecaniformes
Family:	Phalacrocoracidae

### Features

An adult double-crested cormorant is 29 to 35 inches long and has a black body. Both sexes are similar in appearance. Yellow-orange coloring is present on its throat. It has a long tail and neck. The tip of the bill is curved like a hook. Its legs and feet are black.

### Natural History

The double-crested cormorant breeds in the northern United States and southern Canada. It lives on lakes, rivers, or swamps. It eats primarily amphibians, crayfish, fish, and mollusks (snails, mussels). It feeds by diving from the surface of the water to depths of five to 25 feet. It can stay under water up to 70 seconds. This bird prefers to feed in open water. Cormorants fly in a V-shaped formation like geese. They do not call during flight. The cormorant rests on driftwood within the water body. The bill points up when it swims. Nesting occurs in colonies over water during April through May. Nests are made of sticks and placed in dead trees. Three to five pale blue eggs

are laid. The double-crested cormorant is a very aggressive bird and protects its territory around the nest. Young birds leave the nest after two to three weeks. Double crested cormorants were listed as endangered in Iowa between 1985 and 1994, but were removed from the list because of increased nesting in the state. They are more common along the Mississippi River and scattered elsewhere.

### Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; natural lakes and prairies marshes

### Iowa Status

common; native

### Iowa Range

summer: scattered throughout Iowa in suitable habitats; migrant: statewide

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.